

REMARKS

This is in full and timely response to the Final Office Action mailed on April 1, 2004. Reexamination in light of the amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-18 are currently pending in this application, with claims 1 and 6 being independent.

No new matter has been added.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112

Regarding the rejection of claim 5, while not conceding the propriety of this rejection and in order to advance the prosecution of the above-identified application, claim 5 has been amended in the manner suggested within the Final Office Action. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1 and 3-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as unpatentable over the admitted prior art (specification page 1, lines 9-25, page 2 lines 1-4 and page 9 lines 2-6) in view of Kukimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,445,201) and Kabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,345,988) and optionally Montagne (U.S. Patent No. 3,763,911).

This rejection is traversed at least for the following reasons.

Claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon are drawn to a pneumatic tire provided with a plurality of main grooves extended in a tire circumferential direction on a tread surface, wherein, with regard to a main groove having a groove width widened during inflation among said plurality of main grooves and including a generally U-shaped main groove portion and a narrow groove portion, a groove wall near a shoulder is inclined outward in a tire width direction from the tread surface toward a groove bottom, a single generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib protrudes from the groove bottom along the groove wall near the shoulder and has a first slanted wall inclined outward that extends in cross-section parallel with the groove wall near the shoulder to form the narrow groove portion therebetween and a second slanted wall inclined

inward in the tire width direction, and a groove wall near the center is inclined outward in the tire width direction from the tread surface toward the groove bottom and forms the generally U-shaped main groove portion with the second slanted wall of the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib.

The Final Office Action admits that a thin rib is absent from the main groove of the tire shown within the admitted prior art.

Figures 19a, 19b, 20a and 20b of Kukimoto et al. arguably show a one side depressed type of stepped zone wherein the stepped zone 3 is disposed in a main groove I and separated from adjacent lands by a narrow cut 4' and a narrow groove 10, respectively, with the narrow grooves 10 located on one side thereof (column 8, lines 3-8). Nevertheless, figures 19a, 19b, 20a and 20b fail to show a groove wall near a shoulder being inclined outward in a tire width direction from the tread surface toward a groove bottom, and a groove wall near the center being inclined outward in the tire width direction from the tread surface toward the groove bottom. In this regard, Kukimoto et al. fails to clearly show the groove walls being inclined in the same direction.

Figure 2 of Kabe et al. arguably teaches a groove wall near a shoulder 3 and a groove wall near the center being inclined in the same direction. Figure of Kabe et al. arguably depicts the groove wall near the shoulder 3 being inclined inward in a tire width direction from the tread surface toward a groove bottom, and the groove wall near the center being inclined inward in the tire width direction from the tread surface toward the groove bottom. In this regard, Kabe et al. fails to clearly show the groove walls being inclined opposite to those of the claimed invention.

Figure 1 of Montagne arguably teaches shoulders 14, 15 and grooves 18, 19 adjacent the shoulders 14, 15. However, Montagne fails to clearly show grooves 18, 19 as including a narrow groove portion.

Thus, all features are not found within the admitted prior art, Kukimoto et al., Kabe et al., and Montagne, either individually or in combination. Withdrawal of this rejection and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Newly added claims

Claim 6 and the claims dependent thereon include the features of:

a tread portion having a plurality of main grooves therein, said plurality of main grooves extending in a tire circumferential direction along a tread surface; and

a side wall portion of the pneumatic tire contacting a shoulder of said tread portion, said shoulder being outward in a tire width direction, wherein:

at least one interior main groove of said plurality of main grooves is located at the center of said tread portion and extends from said tread surface,

at least one exterior main groove of said plurality of main grooves is between at least one interior main groove and said shoulder,

said at least one exterior main groove has a first groove wall, a second groove wall, and a thin rib,

said first and second groove walls extend from said tread surface to the bottom of said at least one exterior main groove, and incline outward in said tire width direction from said tread surface toward the bottom of said at least one exterior main groove, and

said thin rib protrudes from said bottom of said at least one exterior main groove, a space between said thin rib and said first groove wall being larger than a space between said thin rib and said second groove wall.

The admitted prior art, Kukimoto et al., Kabe et al., and Montagne, either individually or as a whole, fail to disclose, teach or suggest the features of first and second groove walls extending from a tread surface to the bottom of an exterior main groove, and inclining outward in the tire width direction from the tread surface toward the bottom of the exterior main groove. Thus, all features are not found within the admitted prior art, Kukimoto et

al., Kabe et al., and Montagne, either individually or in combination. Allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, all the claims now pending in the present application are allowable, and the present application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reexamination and reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and remarks is courteously solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments or suggestions that could place this application in even better form, the Examiner is requested to telephone Brian K. Dutton, Reg. No. 47,255, at 202-955-8753.

If any fee is required or any overpayment made, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the fee or credit the overpayment to Deposit Account # 18-0013.

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Respectfully submitted,

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